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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: CATHOLIC BISHOPS SIDESTEP ISSUE OF WHETHER ARROYO SHOULD RESIGN

REF: A. OPS CENTER - MANILA 07-10-05 TELCON

[1B](#). MANILA 3163

[1C](#). MANILA 3162

[1D](#). MANILA 3154

[¶11.](#) (U) Summary: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) sidestepped the issue of whether President Arroyo should resign in their statement on the political situation on July 10. On one hand, the group stated that it did not demand her resignation, while on the other hand it called on the President to examine the situation and to make the best decision for the country. Amid mounting calls for her to resign, the statement appears to have given Arroyo some breathing room. End Summary.

[¶12.](#) (U) In a July 10 press conference, Archbishop Fernando Capalla, outgoing President of the CBCP, read the group's statement which stopped short of demanding the President's resignation. The statement read, in part, "...in a spirit of humility and truth, we declare our prayerfully discerned collective decision that we do not demand her resignation." The CBCP statement added that it did not "simply dismiss such a call from others," however.

[¶13.](#) (U) The CBCP went on to state that "we would ask the President to discern deeply to what extent she might have contributed to the erosion of effective governance and whether the erosion is so severe as to be irreversible. In her heart she has to make the necessary decision for the sake of the country." The bishops also stated that restoring trust would require a thorough, credible, and independent process to examine the recent scandals that have rocked Malacanang.

[¶14.](#) (U) The CBCP praised the military and police for what it said was their "loyalty to our Constitution" and the CBCP rejected calls for "juntas or revolutionary councils." It also rejected the use of violence and denounced groups who were trying to "exploit our vulnerable national situation in order to create confusion and social chaos."

[¶15.](#) (U) Comment: As reviewed in Reftels, Arroyo has faced mounting calls to resign due to the recent scandals. The much-awaited CBCP statement appears to have given her some breathing room by not explicitly demanding her resignation. Mission will continue to canvass reaction.

MUSSOMELI